



## Dr. Rollin George Douma

September 15, 1940 - March 12, 2011

Dr. Rollin George Douma, a long-time faculty member at WMU, died Saturday, March 12, 2011 after living with esophageal cancer for over eight months. Born in Evanston, Illinois in 1940, Rollin was raised in East Grand Rapids with his sister and parents, George and Pryna Douma. His sister Rosemary and her husband Harold Cornelius, reside in Grand Rapids, where the Doumas enjoyed many family Thanksgiving dinners with nieces and nephews. Dr. Rollin Douma was a 40 year resident of Kalamazoo where he joined WMU in 1970 after earning his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Michigan. Rollin was a professor of English who held a variety of administrative posts at the University. Most recently, he served as associate vice president for Academic Affairs from 2003 until his retirement in 2006. Previous positions included interim dean of the College of Education; dean of the Graduate College from 1994 to 1997; interim dean of the Graduate College from 1992 to 1994; and associate dean of the College from 1979 to 1992. Active on numerous University committees and task forces, Dr. Douma served as editor of the University catalogues for over twenty years. Rollin was very happily married to Sheppy Douma, his best friend and soul mate for 45 1/2 years. They shared along with their unusual names many common interests including an enthusiasm for sports. While raising their two children, Jaan and Molly, they frequently played soccer, tennis and skied together as a family. Beginning in 1973 they spent summers on the lake at Port Sheldon, Michigan where they witnessed a multitude of sunsets and finally a few years

ago saw the elusive green flash together. Rollin brought to all aspects of his life diligence, enthusiasm and a quest for excellence. Always with an eye for contemporary architecture, he was very satisfied to help in the design of a new home constructed on the site of the family's original cottage. At age 60 he organized the Rolympics at Port Sheldon with ten events for all participants including hurdling, which was added to commemorate that Rollin was the 1958 all state hurdler from East Grand Rapids High School. Recently his son in law, BJ Brewer, noted that Rollin's record times are still very fast for low and high hurdles. Overcoming many hurdles was a part of Rollin's life as he survived metastatic melanoma for 20 years. Rollin and Sheppy took on the philosophy of carpe diem in 1991 and did live each day to its fullest. Travel naturally was part of living life to the full. His favorite destination in recent years was Bozeman, Montana to ski, hike, fish and savor the mountains with his daughter Molly and her husband BJ Brewer. In addition, Sheppy and Rollin loved cycling in memorable places in both the US and Europe. Rollin's son and daughter in law, Dr. Jaan Douma and Chris Douma, and their children formed an important part of his life in Kalamazoo. The last five years were very special to Rollin in his role as "Poppa" to his three grandchildren, Jansen, Tenley and Harper. Living on Songbird Lane, with its view of the lake and woods, allowed Rollin to observe the many birds living in Parkview Hills. An avid reader, Rollin was content sitting in the bird room with his latest novel in hand; but he also loved the outdoor life and took great pleasure in his fishing trips with friends to Northern Michigan--his enthusiasm even led him to tie his own flies. He took excellent care of his wife--cooking many a fine meal for his family and friends. He always made clear the joie de vivre he felt for 70 years of life, taking art classes for the first time in the last year of his life. Rollin handled his cancer diagnosis with introspection and wisdom and shared this perspective with his family and friends in a series of chapters he wrote on how he was coming to terms with the disease. A gifted and prolific writer, his words helped us all to cope and learn. Rollin will be cremated with no immediate service. To celebrate his full life, as he would have wished, however, there will

be a memorial in Port Sheldon in July 1, 2011. Memorial contributions can be made to Rose Arbor Hospice, 5473 Croyden, Kalamazoo, MI 49009-1091 where Rollin was given tender and loving care for 6 weeks. \*\*\*\*\*DR.  
DOUMA'S DVD TRIBUTE WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING MONDAY,  
MARCH 14, 2011\*\*\*\*\*

# Tribute Wall



“ Harper Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma



Harper Funeral Home - March 12, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Dr. Rollin George Douma

October 23, 2023 at 06:06 AM



“ Dr. Rollin George Douma

October 06, 2023 at 10:42 AM



“ RoseElla P. Lyke - WMU Aviation lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma



RoseElla P. Lyke - WMU Aviation - April 06, 2011 at 09:44 AM

RA

*My prayers go out to the Douma Family. Dr. Douma ALWAYS made me feel welcome and was always glad to see me. He always had a moment to chat. He will surely be missed.*

*RoseElla P. Lyke College of Aviation*

RoseElla P. Lyke - WMU Aviation - April 06, 2011 at 09:57 AM

DW

“ *Deb Withee lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



Deb Withee - March 24, 2011 at 07:18 AM

SJ

“ *Only a few short years ago, I was the new kid on the block as a new staff member to WMU! But Dr. Rollin Douma treated me as if I'd been there for years & that made me feel welcome. He was kind, thoughtful & funny! My thoughts & prayers go out the family. May God give you peace during this time. Respectfully yours, Stephanie Jones (Office of the Registrar)*

stephanie jones - March 22, 2011 at 02:58 PM

AB

“ *Arlene Buchanan lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



Arlene Buchanan - March 21, 2011 at 03:38 PM

SP

“ I had Rollin as an English prof in the 70s and then as a College of Ed dean in the 2000s. Both times, it was a joy to work with him. He managed to be professional and personable at the same time. WMU has lost a great administrator, teacher, heart. I am holding you, his family, in my thoughts and prayers.

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**Sue Poppink** - March 18, 2011 at 12:18 PM

MH

“ I will remember Dr. Douma as an exceptionally kind and caring person. He embodied what I like to think of as the "Western Way," making time for others, and always very thoughtful towards students and colleagues. He will be greatly missed.

*With sincere sympathy,  
Michelle Hruska*

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**Michelle Hruska** - March 18, 2011 at 07:18 AM

TD

“ My Thoughts and prayers to Jaan, Molly, and Sheppy. With Love and Respect, Thom Davidson



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**Thomas Davidson** - March 18, 2011 at 07:18 AM

DT

“ Some people do seemingly little things that become huge. Mr. Douma gave me my first shot at soccer, which led to high school and college soccer, which led to my application to vet school where he wrote my personal recommendation which got me in. Now I teach at U. Minn Veterinary School and think about his career and contribution and am amazed both personally and professionally. Thank you Mr. Douma for your part in my life as well as the Douma family for many years of friendship. My sincere condolences during this difficult time. - Dominic Travis

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**Dominic Travis** - March 17, 2011 at 04:12 PM

ML

“ I was saddened to hear of Rollin's passing. I remember fondly his enthusiasm coaching soccer (TNT - the neighborhood team) and the fun I had on his teams (indoor and outdoor). Thunder and lightning! My thoughts and prayers are with his family.

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**Mark Libby** - March 16, 2011 at 06:33 PM

MC

“ Michele Cole lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma



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**Michele Cole** - March 16, 2011 at 02:13 PM

MH

“ Sheppy, I am so very sorry to hear of the passing of your husband. You and your family will be in my thoughts and prayers.

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**Martha Huiskamp** - March 15, 2011 at 11:03 PM

BT

“ *Bonnie Thomas lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



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**Bonnie Thomas** - March 15, 2011 at 02:01 PM

BT

*Sheppy, Jaan and Douma family.  
Thinking of you and your great loss.  
May the wonderful memories you have comfort you now and always.  
Bonnie & Charlie*

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**Bonnie Thomas** - March 15, 2011 at 02:07 PM

LD

“ *Rollin was a warm and valued colleague, a person of the highest integrity and with great concern for our students. He was always fair, honest, and extremely knowledgeable about complex policy issues with a kind, helpful manner that served all of us well in so many instances. I worked with him over thirty years on a range of issues and topics and always found him to be a valuable contributor and quiet sage about policy questions. We seem to be losing the best among us far too early and I send my deep condolences to Sheppy and his entire family - I pray they will find comfort with each other and know how many lives were helped by Rollin day after day after day.*

*Linda Delene*

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**Linda M. Delene** - March 15, 2011 at 11:29 AM

DJ

“ *Deborah Heffley Jones lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



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**Deborah Heffley Jones** - March 15, 2011 at 09:42 AM

JH

“ *Julie Heath lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



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**Julie Heath** - March 14, 2011 at 03:38 PM

CH

“ *Chris Heath lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



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**Chris Heath** - March 14, 2011 at 03:36 PM

AB

“ *Amy Lynne Burns lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



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**Amy Lynne Burns** - March 14, 2011 at 02:27 PM

LC

“ *Lillie Cotton lit a candle in memory of Dr. Rollin George Douma*



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**Lillie Cotton** - March 14, 2011 at 12:22 PM

LC

*What I remember most about Dr. Douma, was when the warm weather arrived he wore his penny loafers with no socks. He would sit in the admissions receptionst area and read the newspaper with his legs crossed. Said very little, but he would smile. The moment I meet him I knew he had a kind soul and loving spirit.*

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**Lillie Cotton** - March 14, 2011 at 12:29 PM

LC

“ *What I remember most about Dr. Douma is soon as the warm weather arrived, he wore no socks and his penny loafers. He would sit in the admissions receptionist area and would read the newspaper with his legs crossed. He did not have much to say, just sit and read the paper. My thoughts and prayers go out to the family.*

*Lillie Cotton  
Admissions*

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**Lillie Cotton** - March 14, 2011 at 12:02 PM



“ *0 file added to the tribute wall*

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**Katrina and Bonnie Bayuk** - March 13, 2011 at 10:38 PM

KB

“ *The obituary captured Rollin beautifully. How we all will miss his quiet but every present zest for life. He is an inspiration for how he adored his family--and even at Rose Arbor, with his physical faculties fading, when he would reach out to hug Sheppy or one of the kids or the grand kids, you could see the love that he felt --and the smiles that he bestowed are precious memories. Trin and Bonnie*

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**Katrina Clark and Bonnie Bayuk** - March 13, 2011 at 09:32 PM

DH

“ *Sheppy, Jaan, Molly, our sympathy goes out to all of your family as you morn the loss of a truly remarkable man, someone so dear to you. It was with sadness that we saw the obituary in todays Gazette, though we knew from your Christmas letter that Rollin's cancer existed, we wanted to believe that life would go on. Dave was closest to Rollin through the years, especially during the days of our children's youth. He wanted to leave a couple of memories for you:*

*I was Rollin's assistant coach the first year that our boys played AYSO soccer and marveled at his unflappability when our younger son Craig showed more interest in picking dandelions than in guarding our end of the soccer pitch. Years later when we played together on the soccer coaches' team in the intramural soccer league I was equally amazed at how this same unflappable man took delight in demolishing the forwards on opposing soccer clubs. I was always thankful that he was on my side and that we competed only along the sidelines at our sons' soccer games.*

*He and Sheppy both have meant a lot to the youth soccer community in the Greater Kalamazoo area. He will be sorely missed.*

*Dave and Lyn Hargeave*

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**Dave and Lyn Hargreave** - March 13, 2011 at 08:26 PM

DH

“ *I never dreaded meetings at WMU if Rollin was on the committee. He was fun, pragmatic, and did not take trivia too seriously. He was grand to work with and he has been missed since he retired and will be remembered as a fine man who was a gentleman. --dr. Diane Hamilton*



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**dr. Diane Hamilton** - March 13, 2011 at 04:04 PM